The Sign of Receiving the Spirit

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On the Doctrine of the Sign of Receiving the Spirit

To write a theologically substantial paper on the doctrine known as *"the sign of receiving the Spirit"* would require a high level of technical exegesis and interpretive skill. I must honestly admit that I do not possess such academic expertise. My life and ministry have been devoted primarily to pioneer evangelism and missionary work in undeveloped areas, not to scholarly theology.

Nevertheless, as one who has served as a Pentecostal evangelist, I hope that by presenting this essay in a reflective and descriptive manner, I may be granted the understanding and goodwill of my fellow workers in Christ.

The doctrine of *the sign of receiving the Spirit* has, from the earliest days of the Pentecostal movement to the present, remained a source of controversy. At times it has functioned as a bond of fellowship; at other times, as a cause of division. In its earliest phase, Pentecostal churches and their teachings were often mocked, ridiculed, rejected, and in some cases even labeled heretical.

However, following the Second World War, Pentecostalism gradually gained recognition within the broader Christian world. Approximately twenty years later, the movement began to spread beyond churches that were historically close to its origins and found significant growth within sacramental traditions such as the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. As this occurred, resistance from established churches diminished, allowing the movement to remain within existing ecclesial structures. At the same time, Pentecostal teaching was increasingly received not according to classical Pentecostal theology, but reinterpreted within the theological frameworks of each host tradition. This development is commonly known as the *Charismatic Movement*.

Roughly twenty years after that, Pentecostal spirituality experienced yet another expansion. It began to be embraced within evangelical churches such as those of the Reformed and Baptist traditions. These believers accepted Pentecostal understandings of the work of the Holy Spirit without altering their own or theological foundations. This development has come to be known as *the Third Wave movement*.

Both the Charismatic Movement and the Third Wave movement, like traditional Pentecostal churches, emphasize the active work of the Holy Spirit through believers. They highlight healing, miracles, deliverance from evil spirits, prophecy, tongues, other spiritual gifts, and the fruit of the Spirit related to Christian character. Because participants in these movements often share intense spiritual experiences not produced by human effort, a strong ecumenical tendency has naturally emerged.

At the same time, however, genuine fellowship across denominational boundaries has proven difficult. The underlying theological differences remain significant, and these differences continue to limit deeper unity.

In addition to doctrinal differences, there is another reason why traditional Pentecostal churches hesitate to engage in close fellowship with these newer Pentecostal movements (sometimes referred to as *Neo-Pentecostal movements*). That reason concerns the issue of *the sign* of receiving the Holy Spirit.

Traditional Pentecostal faith affirms that speaking in tongues is the sign of having received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and assigns to tongues a unique and decisive significance. In contrast, the majority of those involved in the Charismatic and Third Wave movements acknowledge that speaking in tongues may accompany the baptism in the Holy Spirit and that it is one of the spiritual gifts. However, they do not accept tongues as *the sign* of Spirit baptism. They believe that baptism in the Holy Spirit may occur without speaking in tongues, and many openly claim that although they have never spoken in tongues, they have nonetheless received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

As Pentecostals, we rejoice that these brothers and sisters have turned their attention to the work of the Holy Spirit, opened their hearts to Him, and experienced His power. At the same time, we must honestly acknowledge our hesitation to engage in practical cooperation, due to concerns about pastoral confusion that could arise.

Nevertheless, as members of the one body of Christ, we must strive to pursue proper fellowship. To do so, it is essential that we clearly reaffirm our own position of faith and engage with understanding and respect. This essay is therefore not written to expose differences in order to justify separation, but rather to seek a higher level of fellowship that can transcend those differences.

Strictly speaking, even within the Assemblies of God there exist various differences of interpretation. What truly matters is fellowship that surpasses disagreement. If fellowship is preserved, truth will demonstrate its own power.

Today, it is said that there are between 500 and 600 million Pentecostal and Pentecostal-related Christians worldwide. This remarkable growth has been made possible by the emergence of new Pentecostal movements. It is the result of Pentecostal churches extending the hand of fellowship beyond misunderstanding and division.

I. The Issue of Tongues in Modern Church History

Throughout the history of the Church, speaking in tongues has appeared sporadically as a religious phenomenon. Even within Protestant history, it can be found among Pietists, Quakers, Moravians, the Methodist movement, and others. However, tongues did not come to be recognized as a significant matter of faith, nor did it receive sustained theological reflection or doctrinal formulation, until the nineteenth century.

Edward Irving (1792－1834)

Edward Irving was an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland (the Calvinistic Presbyterian Church). After being dismissed from his position for allowing unordained individuals to speak from the pulpit, he went on to found the Catholic Apostolic Church.

Irving had a strong interest in Christology. Through his studies, he came to understand that Christ, having become fully human, received the Holy Spirit at His baptism and thereby entered into His public ministry as the Savior. From this, Irving concluded that believers likewise must receive the power of the Holy Spirit. He therefore began to focus on Christ’s promise that He Himself would baptize believers in the Holy Spirit and grant them power.

Irving also recognized that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was a distinct experience, occurring after conversion and sanctification. He taught that all believers could partake of this baptism. It is likely that he was the first person in church history to explicitly claim that speaking in tongues was the *sign* of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Within the Catholic Apostolic Church that he founded, baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by tongues did occur, and spiritual gifts were frequently manifested.

Unfortunately, however, the movement disappeared after a very short period of time. Although this movement preceded the American Pentecostal revival of the early twentieth century by nearly a century and had no direct historical connection to it, the similarity between the two movements is unmistakable. It is also reasonable to assume that Irving's movement exerted some influence on the Pentecostal developments in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century.

Charles Fox Parham (1873 – 1929)

Charles Fox Parham was born in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century, at a time when revival within the Methodist–Wesleyan tradition, known as the Holiness Movement, was intensifying. Interest in the work of the Holy Spirit was rapidly increasing, and the theme of the *baptism in the Holy Spirit*—understood as an experience of sanctification—was widely preached from pulpits and circulated through pamphlets.

By this time, the Holiness Movement had already extended beyond the Methodist–Wesleyan tradition that emphasized a "second blessing." It had begun to include Reformed and Baptist believers who advocated the "Finished Work" theology. In addition, elements of Restorationism and Dispensationalism were being incorporated, heightening eschatological expectations and fueling an intense passion for world evangelization in anticipation of Christ's return.

By the time Parham reached maturity, the understanding of the baptism in the Holy Spirit had already begun to shift—from a *baptism for sanctification* to a *baptism for missionary power*.

Parham became a healing evangelist within the Methodist–Holiness tradition. Through interaction with Quaker and Plymouth Brethren evangelists, he became deeply dissatisfied with what he viewed as water baptism being reduced to a mere ritual. His attention increasingly turned to baptism in the Holy Spirit, and he developed a profound interest in speaking in tongues.

This interest was sparked by reports from multiple missionaries who claimed that, through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, they had been enabled to speak foreign languages they had never learned—a phenomenon known as *xenolalia* or *xenoglossia*. Parham understood this form of tongues as identical to that described in Acts chapter 2 and believed it to be a divine gift given to accelerate world evangelization in the last days.

Accordingly, Parham began earnestly seeking both baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. He taught his students at a small Bible school he had recently opened to do the same. The students took his instruction seriously, and through their study of the Book of Acts, they concluded that speaking in tongues was the *evidence* of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

They devoted themselves to prayer, and on New Year's Day in 1901, a female student named Agnes Ozman experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. It is reported that she initially spoke Chinese and later a language from Eastern Europe. Shortly thereafter, Parham himself and approximately half of the students also experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by tongues. At least two students, however, regarded these events as madness and withdrew from the school.

From this point forward, Parham passionately promoted the doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by tongues, asserting that tongues were the evidence of Spirit baptism. He frequently used the expression *"the Bible evidence."* The traditional Pentecostal understanding of tongues as *evidence* originates here.

At that time, tongues were still largely understood as foreign languages given for missionary purposes—that is, xenolalia or xenoglossia. As a result, some believers went overseas without studying local languages, trusting that tongues alone would suffice, and many such efforts ended in failure. By around 1907, understanding shifted: tongues came to be seen as speech unknown to the speaker and inspired by the Holy Spirit—possibly a human language spoken somewhere on earth, but more often a language unintelligible to human listeners, known as *glossolalia*.

Whether Parham truly deserves to be called the father of the Pentecostal movement remains highly questionable, given his serious moral failures and numerous doctrinal errors. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that he was a pioneer.

William Seymour (1870–1922)

Another figure who played a crucial role in shaping early Pentecostal understanding of tongues was William Seymour, an African American Holiness preacher.

In 1905, Seymour was given the opportunity to study at Parham's Bible school (a different school from the one mentioned earlier). Because of Parham's racial discrimination, Seymour was not permitted to enter the classroom and was forced to listen from the hallway—according to some accounts, from behind a curtain. Despite

this humiliation, Seymour became a fervent advocate of baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by tongues, even though he himself had not yet experienced it.

However, only two years later, Seymour began to assert that tongues were not the evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Behind this shift lay Parham's intense racism, relentless personal attacks motivated by jealousy toward Seymour and his ministry, as well as Parham's doctrinal deviations and moral scandals involving women, which ultimately led to his arrest.

Coming from a Methodist–Holiness background, Seymour could not accept that a person who behaved in ways contrary to the Spirit could truly have received baptism in the Holy Spirit. Consequently, he could no longer recognize tongues spoken by such individuals as evidence of Spirit baptism.

Seymour therefore began to argue that tongues could occur apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. He extended this reasoning to include tongues-like phenomena found in non-Christian contexts, such as altered psychological states. He came to view tongues not as the evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit, but as *one of the signs* that may accompany it. In his thinking, love, moral purity, and other aspects of Christian character—what we now refer to as the fruit of the Spirit—were higher and more authentic signs.

At the time, a woman pastor named Florence Crawford, who had worked closely with Seymour, warned him not to allow his strong aversion toward Parham's behavior to lead him away from biblical teaching. Nevertheless, Seymour decisively parted ways with Parham both in ministry and in his understanding of tongues.

Seymour's perspective was widely accepted among African American believers of the time and closely resembles the views held today by many within the Charismatic and Third Wave movements. In contrast, Parham's understanding was embraced by mainstream classical Pentecostal denominations, including the Assemblies of God, and has remained influential to the present day.

Terminology and Controversy Concerning Tongues

The conflict and debate between Parham and Seymour, while damaging the credibility of the Pentecostal movement as a whole, also served to deepen understanding and sharpen theological reflection regarding baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. Following them, many well-known and lesser-known figures proposed a wide variety of interpretations. It may even be said that most of the issues surrounding

tongues that concern us today—however immaturely they may have been handled—were already being discussed during the first decade of the twentieth century.

During this period, a range of terminology emerged in relation to tongues, including *"the evidence," "the Bible evidence," "the evidential tongues," "the sign of tongues," "the full Bible evidence," "only evidence," "inevitable evidence,"* and *"outward evidence."* It is likely that this last term later developed into what came to be known as *"the physical evidence."* At that time, however, the expression *"initial evidence"* had not yet come into use.

Conceptually, it appears that most early Pentecostal believers assumed that the nine gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 could only be received after experiencing baptism in the Holy Spirit. Consequently, great emphasis was placed on the exercise of these gifts.

The Assemblies of God at the Time of Its Formation

It is unclear when and by whom the expression *"initial evidence"* was first used. However, in 1916—two years after the founding of the Assemblies of God—the phrase *"the initial sign of speaking in tongues"* appeared in Article 6 of the *Statement of Fundamental Truths*. At that time, however, there was not yet a fully unified understanding within the denomination.

In fact, the issue of tongues soon developed into a serious controversy between two prominent early leaders of the Assemblies of God: Fred Bosworth and Daniel Kerr. Bosworth understood the tongues described in the Book of Acts and those mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14 as the same gift of tongues. Since spiritual gifts are not given to all believers, he concluded that baptism in the Holy Spirit could not be given to all believers either. He further argued that the claim that tongues are the evidence of Spirit baptism is not explicitly taught in Scripture but is merely an inference drawn from three historical incidents recorded in Acts, and that doctrine should not be built upon inference.

In response, Kerr argued that although Acts is a historical narrative, its author Luke selected and arranged his material with a clear theological intention. Therefore, doctrinal formulation based on historical narrative is both legitimate and necessary. He further asserted that the fact that tongues appear repeatedly within Luke's narrative framework indicates that Luke himself regarded this phenomenon as theologically significant.

This controversy came to an end in 1918 with the publication of a revised version of the *Statement of Fundamental Truths*. In this revision, the phrase *"the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues"* was adopted, reflecting Kerr's position, and was described as *"our distinctive testimony."* This established the official doctrinal stance of the Assemblies of God. Shortly thereafter, Bosworth left the denomination. In subsequent years, the expressions *"the initial evidence"* and *"the initial physical evidence"* became widely accepted.

It should be noted that the role of the *Statement of Fundamental Truths* at the time of the denomination's founding was not to rigidly exclude those who disagreed, but rather to serve as a guidepost toward shared understanding. While some, like Bosworth, departed after intense debate, others—such as J. Roswell Flower, who later became one of the denomination's most respected leaders—were able to accept differing experiences with generosity. Flower reportedly declared by faith that he had received baptism in the Holy Spirit, yet did not actually speak in tongues until several months later, without turning this discrepancy into a theological crisis.

Perhaps this reflects a recognition that baptism in the Holy Spirit belongs fundamentally to the realm of faith, and that a perfectly comprehensive theological explanation is ultimately unattainable.

II. The Contemporary Issue of Tongues

Modern debates concerning tongues differ from those of the early Pentecostal period. The earlier controversies primarily involved opposition from Wesleyan–Holiness believers and internal discussions among Pentecostals seeking to shape biblical and theological understanding. Today's debates, while more academically sophisticated, largely mirror those early discussions in content and now focus on achieving mutual understanding with Charismatic and Third Wave believers.

The Assemblies of God and Classical Pentecostal Denominations

For reference, in the 2001 edition of the *Sixteen Fundamental Truths* published by the Assemblies of God in the United States, Article 8 describes tongues as *"the initial physical evidence"* of baptism in the Holy Spirit, while the explanatory text uses the phrase *"the initial physical sign."* This demonstrates that *evidence* and *sign* are used

interchangeably. This understanding—that tongues function as the evidence or sign of Spirit baptism—is shared by many classical Pentecostal denominations.

The most common objection raised against this view is that tongues constitute only one among many possible evidences of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

In Japan, this debate is often framed as a question of *"the sign"* versus *"a sign."* Although there is no record of this precise formulation being used in English-speaking theological discussions, it is likely that missionaries teaching in Bible schools simplified the debate by contrasting *"the physical sign"* with *"a physical sign,"* which then became widely adopted.

We were often taught that while several phenomena accompanied the baptism in the Holy Spirit described in the Book of Acts, tongues appeared in all three recorded instances. Therefore, those who affirm *"the sign"* argue that tongues alone qualify as the definitive sign. Those who affirm *"a sign"* accept phenomena such as the sound of wind, tongues of fire, or other manifestations as equally valid signs, and thus conclude that Spirit baptism can occur without speaking in tongues.

Historically, however, this framing is inaccurate. In the development of Pentecostal doctrine, the real issue was not the phenomena that *accompanied* baptism in the Holy Spirit, but those that *followed* it—such as Christian character, spiritual power, or the exercise of gifts—which some claimed were the true evidence of Spirit baptism. The doctrine of *"the initial physical evidence"* was formulated in response to these claims.

Thus, the term *"initial"* does not mean "prior to accompanying phenomena," since in Acts 2 the sound of wind and tongues of fire appear before tongues. Rather, it means prior to subsequent manifestations such as gifts or fruit of the Spirit. Likewise, *"physical"* does not refer to external physical phenomena like wind or fire, but to something expressed through the human body—hence the Japanese translation *nikutai-teki* ("bodily").

Admittedly, using the term *physical* to describe character traits or ministerial effectiveness is theologically imprecise. This ambiguity likely reflects the fact that the *Statement of Fundamental Truths* was not a product of systematic theological reflection, but a response to controversy, borrowing terminology from the natural sciences popular at the time.

Sanctification and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The claim that sanctified Christian character constitutes the evidence—or even one of the evidences—of baptism in the Holy Spirit cannot be established on the basis of Scripture. Rather, it represents an interpretation that reads Methodist–Holiness theology into the biblical text.

If, when the Assemblies of God speaks of *"initial,"* it intends this term in relation to Christian character or moral transformation, then it would necessarily imply that such traits are themselves evidence of Spirit baptism. This would in turn demonstrate a strong influence from Methodist–Holiness theology. While it is certainly true that Christian character is related to the work of the Holy Spirit and not unrelated to baptism in the Holy Spirit—something that can be affirmed from Paul's theology of the Spirit—Scripture nowhere teaches that sanctification is either the direct purpose or the inevitable result of Spirit baptism.

The association between Spirit baptism and sanctification seems to have arisen from a chain of assumptions: the Holy Spirit is holy; Christian life involves holiness; John the Baptist spoke of baptism *"with the Holy Spirit and fire"*; and the Pentecost event included imagery of fire. From these elements, it was inferred that Spirit baptism must be equivalent to a *baptism of fire for sanctification*.

However, when John the Baptist spoke of *"the Holy Spirit and fire,"* the fire he referred to was not the *purifying fire* commonly assumed within Holiness traditions, but rather the *fire of judgment*, as becomes clear when the passage is read in its immediate context. While the Holy Spirit is indeed holy, His sanctifying work and His empowering work are distinct operations.

Therefore, while we should respect the spiritual experiences of those who testify to sanctification, if they claim that such an experience constitutes baptism in the Holy Spirit, they must demonstrate this claim on biblical grounds.

Spiritual Gifts and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

It is also mistaken to assume that possession of spiritual gifts—particularly the nine gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12—serves as evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Because many early Pentecostals believed that these nine gifts were only given after Spirit baptism, it became possible to conclude that anyone exercising even one of these gifts must have received the baptism, even if they had never spoken in tongues.

Scripture, however, does not teach that the nine gifts cannot be given apart from baptism in the Holy Spirit, nor does it record any events that would support such an

inference. Fundamentally, spiritual gifts and baptism in the Holy Spirit are distinct works.

Luke's writings clearly associate Spirit baptism with power. When this is harmonized with Paul's teaching, it is reasonable to infer within systematic theology that Spirit baptism empowers believers to use spiritual gifts more effectively and dynamically. It is not that the gifts are given only after baptism in the Holy Spirit, but rather that Spirit baptism enables those gifts to be exercised with greater power and effectiveness.

Moreover, there is no compelling reason to single out the nine gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 as uniquely special. These were likely the most prominent gifts in Paul's mind at the time, but there is no indication that they differed in essence from the various other gifts he lists elsewhere.

Both baptism in the Holy Spirit and the distribution of gifts are works of the Holy Spirit. Yet baptism in the Holy Spirit is something Christ gives, while gifts as abilities are given by the Holy Spirit Himself.

For this reason, those who claim, *"I have never spoken in tongues, but I have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit,"* must provide biblical grounds for identifying their spiritual experience as Spirit baptism. Miracles, healings, and profound spiritual experiences are all worthy of respect. However, unless such experiences can be shown biblically to constitute baptism in the Holy Spirit, we must answer that claim in the negative.

Seen in this light, the distinction between *"the sign"* and *"a sign"*—even if it does not represent an official Assemblies of God formulation—may in fact express the Pentecostal position more accurately. While various phenomena that accompany Spirit baptism, or that follow it in Christian life, may possibly function as signs, only speaking in tongues can be identified unequivocally as *the* sign.

Can Theology and Doctrine Be Derived from the Gospel of Luke?

One of the most fiercely debated issues today concerning the doctrine of Spirit baptism is the claim that it rests solely on the historical narrative of the Book of Acts. Many evangelical critics argue that doctrine cannot legitimately be derived from narrative texts and therefore dismiss Pentecostal theology as lacking a solid foundation.

Some prominent Pentecostal scholars have even aligned themselves with this critique, leaving many ordinary believers unsettled. Yet strong counterarguments have also been advanced. Even if a text is written in narrative form rather than didactic style, its author clearly selected and arranged material with theological intent. Therefore, theology and doctrine may indeed be constructed from such texts.

All Christian theology relies on narrative literature, beginning with the Pentateuch and extending through the Gospels. If theology cannot be derived from narrative, then all theology collapses. Consequently, using Luke's writings as a theological foundation is no more unreasonable than the practices of other theological traditions.

Luke, an exceptionally capable author, gathered extensive material and composed his two-volume work with the explicit purpose of communicating theological truth effectively to Theophilus. These writings are fully capable of serving as a theological foundation.

Nevertheless, the Pentecostal argument that *"three repetitions in narrative imply doctrinal intent"* is unconvincing. Of the four accounts of Spirit baptism in Acts, only three explicitly mention tongues. This omission may indicate that Luke did not intend, within these narratives, to assert tongues as evidence.

What is most significant in Luke's account is the story of Cornelius. In this narrative, the Holy Spirit's careful preparation for Gentile inclusion is emphasized. The outpouring of the Spirit upon Cornelius and all who heard Peter's message served as proof that God grants salvation to Gentiles without discrimination. That the same phenomenon occurred as at the beginning was confirmed by the fact that they spoke in tongues. This was Peter's judgment, the judgment of those who accompanied him, the judgment of the Jerusalem believers, and surely Luke's own judgment.

Thus, it is entirely plausible to conclude that Luke regarded tongues as capable of functioning as evidence of Spirit baptism.

Even so, to assert definitively—on the basis of redaction criticism—that Luke taught tongues as evidence would be overstating the case. Luke himself does not explicitly say so. Even if Luke and the entire early church regarded tongues as evidence, that does not necessarily mean tongues were given *for the purpose* of being evidence. Tongues may have had another primary purpose.

Narrative texts inevitably allow greater interpretive latitude than didactic texts such as Paul's epistles. Interpretation always involves the reader, and with it the possibility of error.

Nevertheless, Luke's writings do indicate that baptism in the Holy Spirit, accompanied by tongues, was expected to be experienced by all believers in the early church. It was not merely exceptional, but normative. Luke records Jesus' words: *"How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"* The Holy Spirit is to be actively sought; those who have not yet experienced Him are encouraged to do so.

The Error of Interpreting Luke Through Paul

Many who oppose Pentecostal theology argue that Paul's epistles, written with explicit instructional intent, must take precedence over Luke's narratives. Because Paul emphasizes the Spirit's role in salvation, indwelling, and growth—and does not explicitly discuss Spirit baptism as a distinct experience—they conclude that Pentecostal teaching overemphasizes tongues and related phenomena.

This reasoning is flawed. Both Luke's writings and Paul's epistles are inspired Scripture, written with theological purpose, and intended to instruct readers. They are not contradictory but complementary.

Much of Luke's theology was undoubtedly shaped by Paul, under whom Luke served. Luke likely completed his writings while Paul was still alive and would not have written anything contradicting Paul's theology. The apparent differences arise because Paul writes from a soteriological and ecclesiological perspective, while Luke writes primarily from a missiological perspective.

Paul presents the Holy Spirit as the One who indwells believers at the moment of salvation, incorporates them into the body of Christ, sanctifies them, strengthens them, distributes gifts, and produces fruit. Luke presents the Holy Spirit as the One who must be actively sought, who is given through Christ as a baptizing experience, and who empowers, guides, and advances mission through signs and wonders.

Interpreting Luke exclusively through Paul is therefore a theological error.

The Error of Interpreting Paul Through Luke

Conversely, interpreting Paul through Luke is equally mistaken—a failure that Pentecostals themselves have sometimes committed. One example is reading Luke's theology of tongues as evidence into Paul's teaching on tongues in 1 Corinthians 12–14.

Historically, Pentecostals have often argued that the tongues accompanying Spirit baptism serve merely as a sign, while the tongues discussed by Paul serve a different purpose. Some have further distinguished between *prayer tongues* and *prophetic tongues*. Yet a straightforward reading of Paul's text—without importing Luke's framework—does not support such distinctions.

Paul speaks of one kind of tongues. Tongues are addressed to God, not to people; they are prayer, not prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:2).

Some argue that tongues accompanying Spirit baptism involve loss of control, whereas Paul assumes controlled speech, and therefore the two must differ. While Luke's observation of loss of control at initiation may be accurate, the conclusion is not. Baptism in the Holy Spirit represents initiation. In such moments, lack of control is understandable. Paul, however, addresses regular congregational worship and warns against importing initiation-level disorder into public assemblies.

Paul valued tongues highly. He stated that he spoke in tongues more than anyone and desired that all believers do so. Nevertheless, because tongues primarily edify the individual rather than the congregation, Paul urged restraint and order in public worship.

Claims that Paul devalued tongues are entirely unfounded.

Similarly, the belief that spiritual gifts can only be given after Spirit baptism reflects reading Luke into Paul. Paul's concern is the Spirit's work within the redeemed community. The Spirit indwells believers at salvation and equips them with gifts for the building up of the church. Luke, by contrast, focuses on empowerment for mission.

Paul's writings must be interpreted within Paul's theology; Luke's writings within Luke's theology. Only then should harmony be sought.

Genuine Tongues

Earlier, I used the expression *"genuine."* By using this word, I am, of course, assuming the existence of counterfeit tongues. The possibility that tongues may be spoken in

certain psychological states was already mentioned in Seymour's discussions. Today, however, much more extensive psychological observation and study have been conducted.

We now know that what are commonly referred to as tongues phenomena can be found within religions throughout the world. Within Christianity, there are humble Roman Catholic believers who never cease to venerate the Virgin Mary and who nevertheless speak in tongues. In the Mormon Church, tongues are regarded as important both doctrinally and practically. In Japan, Shingon Buddhism—under the influence of Nestorian Christianity—has long regarded speaking in tongues as a treasured esoteric practice.

We also know of tongues that arise through imitation, or tongues that begin when someone is encouraged or coached to start speaking by repeating sounds such as "la-la-la." Therefore, the mere fact that someone speaks in tongues cannot, by itself, serve as proof that the person has received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

In the case of Cornelius, tongues were able to function as evidence because the existence of counterfeit tongues was not yet known. Moreover, Peter likely possessed the ability to discern or recognize the Spirit. In our present age, however, we must carefully examine whether what we hear is truly genuine tongues. At the same time, it must be added that the existence of counterfeit tongues does not invalidate what is genuine.

Genuine Tongues

What, then, serves as proof that tongues which function as evidence are truly genuine? Luke himself shows no concern for such a question. This is because the early church was in a condition where tongues could legitimately be regarded as evidence, a situation very different from our own.

On the other hand, the result brought about by the baptism in the Holy Spirit can be described as power and boldness in witness. In Luke's account, all those who received the baptism in the Holy Spirit came to proclaim the gospel boldly. Ironically, in our present age, *tongues as evidence* are themselves tested by whether the baptism in the Holy Spirit proves to have been genuine.

The Purpose of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Luke clearly connects the baptism in the Holy Spirit with power. However, even traditional Pentecostal churches—including our own denomination—may go a step too far when they define the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as power for mission or power for witness.

Such a conclusion is drawn solely from Luke's writings. While it may be said to be Luke's theology from a missiological perspective, it remains questionable as a denominational doctrine. Luke speaks from a missionary viewpoint, but when we attempt to harmonize his theology with Paul's broader teaching on the Holy Spirit, it becomes inappropriate to define power as the purpose of Spirit baptism. Likewise, the results of Spirit baptism should not be confined to the realm of power alone.

Luke emphasizes the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a once-for-all event in the Christian life, while also referring to repeated fillings with the Spirit. Paul, on the other hand, does not emphasize a once-for-all baptism in the Holy Spirit, but instead stresses the ongoing filling of believers with the Spirit.

Because Paul was primarily concerned with concrete pastoral issues, it is likely that he regarded the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a normal, ordinary Christian experience, not a subject requiring special discussion. His interest lay rather in the daily life of faith and church life that follow the initiation experience of Spirit baptism. As already noted, Paul's concern regarding tongues was likewise focused on continuity within daily life and congregational worship.

Although Luke's writings clearly associate Spirit baptism with power and boldness, they do not lead us to conclude that power is the purpose of Spirit baptism. Rather, power and boldness should be understood as one result—indeed, a notable result—of Spirit baptism. This understanding harmonizes better with Paul's theology and accords more naturally with Christian experience. There are many cases in which believers receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit without experiencing any significant increase in power or boldness.

So what, then, is the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Here I wish to make a bold proposal. As I stated at the beginning, profound theological study lies beyond my capacity, and I would welcome deeper research by others.

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit as Fellowship with God

It seems to me that the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is fellowship with God—fellowship that is higher, deeper, purer, richer, and more intimate. Or rather, the baptism in the Holy Spirit *is* such fellowship itself: the entrance into it, and the initiation by which it continues.

When the baptism in the Holy Spirit is understood as fellowship, it harmonizes beautifully with the overarching theme of the entire Bible and with Paul's theology of the Spirit.

The central theme of Scripture is the restoration of fellowship between God and humanity—a fellowship that was lost. Humanity was created to live in fellowship, but once that fellowship was broken, human beings were separated from God, the source of life. Though biologically alive, they became dead as true human beings before God.

The restoration of life—the restoration of fellowship—is the theme that runs throughout the whole Bible. This restoration was accomplished through Christ's atonement, through God's one-sided reconciliation. In order to restore fellowship, God emptied Himself and became human, dwelling among sinners. To restore fellowship, God completed redemption on the cross, tore the temple veil that symbolized separation, and enabled us to approach Him without fear. And for even greater fellowship, God sent His Holy Spirit to dwell within human beings.

Yet God desires still deeper and more intimate fellowship. One day we will be conformed to the image of Christ and enter eternal, unbroken fellowship with God. But even now, while we live in this world, we are allowed to enjoy a foretaste and a seal of what is to come—fellowship with God the Holy Spirit.

Tongues as the Language of Deep Fellowship

There are many kinds and levels of fellowship: friendship, professional relationships, sibling fellowship, parent-child relationships, and marital fellowship. Each has its own nature and depth.

The fellowship with God experienced in the baptism in the Holy Spirit is among the deepest, most intimate, and purest forms of fellowship imaginable. As the term *baptism*

suggests, it is a fellowship in which one's entire being is immersed and dissolved into God the Holy Spirit.Tongues are the words God has specially prepared for use in such fellowship.

Words are ordinarily a means of fellowship, yet they can also become obstacles. Human language can be insufficient—too shallow, too limited—to convey thought, emotion, love, passion, and awe. As fellowship deepens, ordinary words lose their function. The words exchanged between lovers transcend literal meaning; even the words of married couples can render language unnecessary.

At the summit of the profound fellowship with God experienced in the baptism in the Holy Spirit, ordinary human language ceases to function, and communication moves beyond words, beyond rationality, into fellowship of the heart.

Some time ago, I watched a television program in which a father searching for his child among Chinese war orphans finally found his son. As they embraced, weeping, they spoke to each other in wordless sounds—"oh, oh, gwaa-gwaa"—expressions without linguistic meaning. I remember thinking, *Even meaningless words can carry meaning.*

Tongues as an Essential Element of Spirit Baptism

God has given language so that human beings may fellowship with Him at the deepest and most essential level of their being. Whether those words carry conventional meaning or not, tongues are words given by God so that humans may commune with Him beyond rationality.

This may well correspond to what Paul describes in Romans 8:26–27 as the Spirit Himself interceding with groanings too deep for words. This understanding has long been part of traditional Pentecostal interpretation, and modern biblical scholarship increasingly affirms that this traditional understanding is indeed valid.

Seen in this light, tongues have a clear purpose and significance. In fact, traditional Pentecostal teaching often assigns to tongues accompanying Spirit baptism only the value of evidence or sign. Thus, while appearing to emphasize tongues strongly, it in fact diminishes their true importance.

Believers are often taught, *"Do not seek tongues; seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit."* This reflects the assumption that what truly matters is Spirit baptism as empowerment, while tongues are merely incidental signs.

However, if the baptism in the Holy Spirit is understood as one of the highest forms of fellowship with God and as the entrance into even deeper fellowship, then tongues—given as the means of that fellowship—become supremely important.

Put differently, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a form of fellowship that becomes possible only through tongues. Tongues are not merely accompanying signs; they are essential elements that constitute the baptism in the Holy Spirit itself.

To pray, *"Tongues are unnecessary; please give me the baptism in the Holy Spirit,"* is like asking for a rice cake without the sweet bean paste. Tongues transcend the limits of human intellect and serve as a means of heart-to-heart communication beyond reason. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is fellowship of precisely this kind and depth.

Final Reflections

Of course, there must also be deeper and more intimate forms of fellowship, such as the experience Paul described as being caught up to the third heaven. However, Paul never encouraged anyone else to seek or pursue that experience. It was a special privilege granted to him alone.

In contrast, speaking in tongues is something that Paul actively encouraged all Christians to experience—and something they should experience. Through speaking in tongues, we come to sense God's powerful presence, to feel His love, to be struck by His holiness, and, in a manner of speaking, to touch the fullness of God's divine being (as distinct from His personhood).

In such a state, human beings may lose self-control. As in Acts chapter 2, they may even be mistaken for drunk. Paul's exhortation, *"Do not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit,"* suggests a resemblance between the two states—not merely loss of control, but the experience of joy and exhilaration.

Those who experience such fellowship naturally become bold, strong, holy, loving, joyful, and empowered to serve effectively with the gifts they have received. Luke, writing from a missiological perspective, emphasized among these many results the power to witness and proclaim the gospel.

Conclusion

From Luke's writings, we should understand that tongues accompanied the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The story of Cornelius shows that Luke regarded tongues as evidence or sign that the baptism in the Holy Spirit had been received and that the recipient had been accepted by God.

Peter, the brothers who accompanied him, the believers in Jerusalem, and—if Paul read Luke's writings—Paul himself likely shared this understanding.

At the same time, while Luke's writings may lead us to conclude that the purpose of Spirit baptism is power for witness, this conclusion rests solely on Luke's perspective. It is legitimate to construct theology from Luke's writings, but it is not appropriate to establish denominational doctrine from Luke alone.

When we interpret Luke and Paul separately and then seek their harmony, we arrive at the conclusion that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is not primarily an experience given for power or boldness, but fellowship with God itself—a fellowship mediated through the supernatural means God has provided: tongues.

Thus, tongues are not merely evidence or signs accompanying the baptism in the Holy Spirit; they are indispensable elements that make the baptism in the Holy Spirit what it truly is. All baptisms in the Holy Spirit are accompanied by tongues. In this sense, we may define the baptism in the Holy Spirit as *"the initial experience of fellowship with God accompanied by tongues."*

Those who experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit may temporarily lose self-control or fall into ecstasy. They naturally grow in love for God, desire holy living, resist sin, overflow with joy, become bold and strong, and use their gifts more effectively in service.

Tongues are more than evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They are essential to it. Without tongues, the baptism in the Holy Spirit cannot exist.

Through tongues, a level of fellowship with God becomes possible that is otherwise unattainable. This is the fellowship experienced through the baptism in the Holy Spirit and sustained through prayer in tongues.

At the same time, the observation of tongues today does not automatically prove that the baptism in the Holy Spirit has taken place, because tongues unrelated to Spirit baptism also exist, and because habitual tongues can become empty repetition.

Nevertheless, we should more actively affirm the value of tongues, seek them, and encourage believers to speak in tongues.

When we are finally conformed to the image of Christ, we will fully recover perfect fellowship with God, just as Adam and Eve once enjoyed in the garden. Even now, while we live in this world, we are graciously allowed to taste a small foretaste of that perfect fellowship. That foretaste is the baptism in the Holy Spirit—and speaking in tongues.

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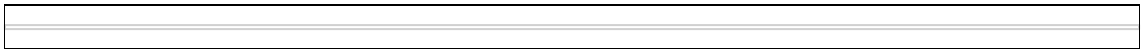

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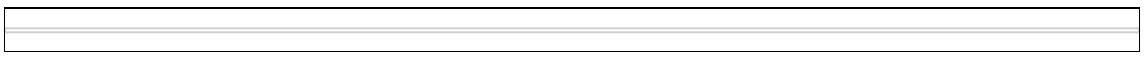

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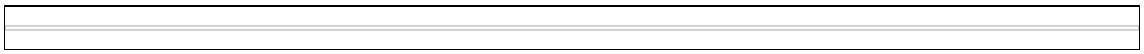

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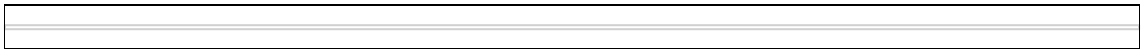

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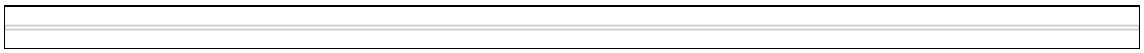

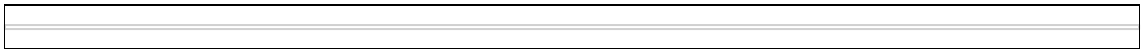

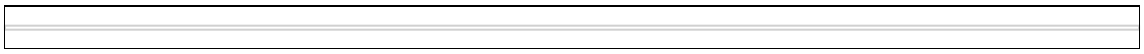

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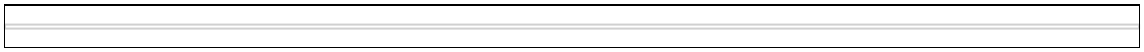

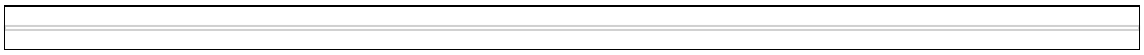

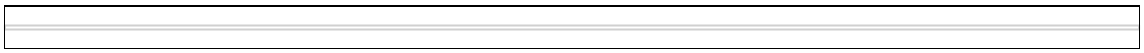

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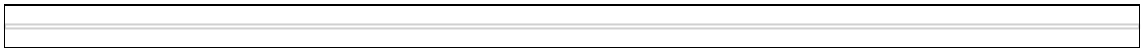

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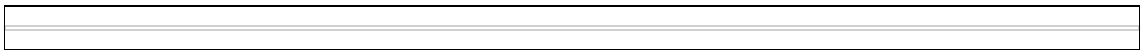

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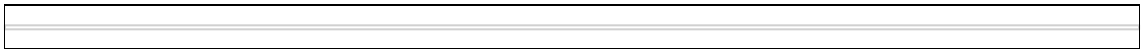

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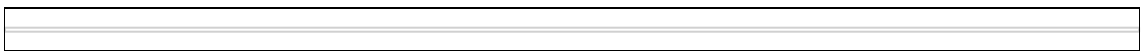

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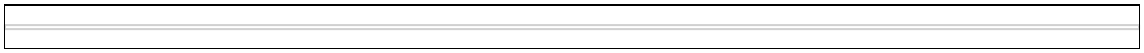

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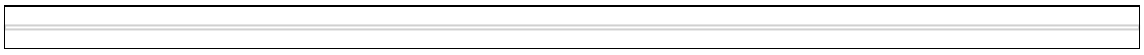

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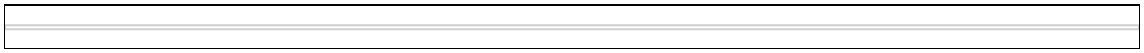

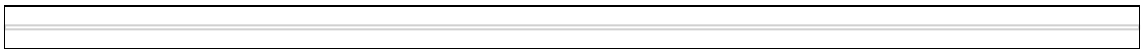

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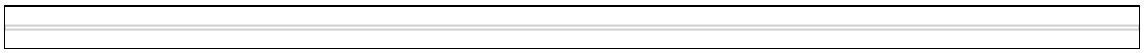

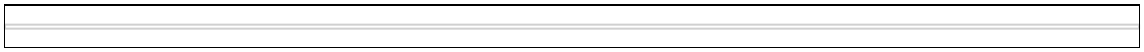

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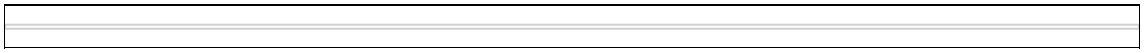

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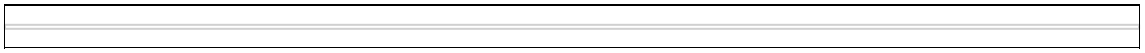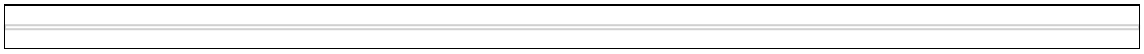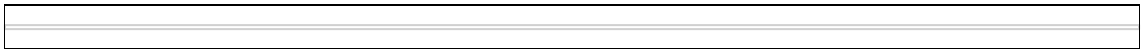
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